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THE CLASSICAL WEEKLY

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In the Educational Review for September (pp. 144-150) an article entitled Classical Studies, by T. E. Page, the well-known editor of Horace and Vergil, is reprinted from the London Times.¹

Mr. Page begins by dwelling on the difference in the position of the Classics in the educational system of England as the result of the introduction within the last fifty years of many new subjects into the curriculum. He passes on to note that classical study does not, and never can, 'pay'. It has, however, its place. "The primal obligation of life is that a man should earn his bread by work, and it is the business of education to fit him for that end. But it is an end which is subordinate and not final; for beyond and above the studies which help to win bread are the studies which help to make a man, which lead not to wealth, but to well-being"

Mr. Page remarks that in England "It is the position of the Classics in the lower forms and as a part of general education that is being steadily undermined", and argues that classical teachers ought to consider anew, with the utmost care, the teaching of the Classics in such lower grades. The accurate and thorough study of the Classics which was possible in the days when little else was taught is, says Mr. Page, no longer possible in the lower forms, i. e. in the period which precedes specialization in classical study. "Indeed, a drastic reduction in the multitude of things which a boy is compelled to learn is just now the reform most needed in education. . . . About two solid courses, supplemented by some trifles that suit his taste, would most promote his health and vigor. But the solid courses need not be made too heavy and repugnant, and The Classical Association has recently put forth a proposal with a view to lightening and improving classical study, which deserves at least very full consideration. Holding that such study is an integral part of a liberal education, it suggests that the old method of teaching Latin fully, both from a linguistic and a literary point of view, should be retained, but that in Greek, at least in lower forms, it is desirable largely to put aside grammar and

composition, so as to aim chiefly at attaining some power of appreciating its literature. Much time would thus be saved, for the power to read a language with interest can be acquired far more quickly than the power to use it with even moderate accuracy; and provided that Latin, which is a perfect instrument of linguistic discipline, be learned carefully, there can be no reason why the study of Greek should not be pursued in a less rigorous and more attractive manner".

Mr. Page argues that the "distinction of the best Greek literature is its great simplicity"; hence, if technicalities are disregarded, an ordinary boy might quickly be taught to understand and enjoy large portions of Homer, Herodotus, Sophocles and Plato. Such reading, says Mr. Page, is as valuable as learning which is concerned wholly with obscure details or the fine perplexities of a hypothetical sentence. That ordinary boys take an intelligent and living interest in Greek writings can hardly be asserted, but they certainly might be brought to do so "if time were devoted rather to the realities than to the accidents of Greek literature; and until the teaching of Greek can be submitted successfully to some such test its claim still to rank as a necessary part of higher education not only must be, but perhaps ought to be, held unproved. Whatever be the future of Latin, the survival of Greek certainly depends on its study being made more living and fruitful than it now is. The suggestion of The Classical Association undoubtedly holds out some hope of really making it so; and those who control our great schools will, therefore, if they are wise, give that suggestion a fair, full and immediate trial".

Mr. Page passes on to urge that it is of supreme importance to maintain the place of the Classics in education, since they form the one bulwark against that purely utilitarian tendency which depreciates every study that has no practical value. "Indeed", he continues, "it is no paradox to say that the educational value of classical study consists largely in the fact that it is what the world calls 'useless', so that there is no temptation to subordinate it to unworthy aims; while, on the other hand, its true usefulness is beyond question. For the difference between a modern and an ancient tongue is often so

¹ Unsigned editorials are by the Editor-in-chief, to other editorials the initials of the writer are appended.

great that for a boy to make out the meaning of a simple Latin passage, and still more to write even the shabbiest bit of Latin prose, requires something beyond mere memory and imitation, demanding as it does a real active and originaive mental effort. The learner can not remain wholly passive or receptive. He must do or contribute something of his own, and it is in encouraging this habit, in developing latent power into living energy, that the secret of true education lies. The positive results immediately secured often appear poor, but the process itself is of the highest value, and those who sneer at it as 'mental gymnastics' forget that it is as necessary to mental health as exercise is to physical, while when they proceed to deride the Classics as 'dead' languages they do plain violence to fact. For who can say that Greek and Latin are in any true sense dead? In literature and art, in science and philosophy, in all that concerns law, social order, and the principles of government, we are connected in an unbroken and living union with Greece and Rome. Their history is an organic part of our own, their words breathe on our lips, their thoughts are wrought into the tissue of our intellectual being, and the public schools, ever since their foundation, have wisely maintained the principle that learning can not be separated from its source; nor is their record as makers of men so poor that they need timorously put aside this good tradition in obedience to popular clamor".

Mr. Page concludes with an earnest plea to the masters of the great English schools to cast about for a remedy of the situation which he has described (in much too somber terms, at times, we think). Amid all the changed conditions of modern education there is yet room, he holds, much room, for classical studies; the problem of the schools is to determine how they shall keep that place for the Classics. "Possibly they may still continue to ignore it and, either through indolent neglect or the preoccupation of sordid cares, allow a study which is their oldest heritage slowly to decline and disappear. But if they do so, if they forget alike their traditions and responsibilities, they will incur the charge not merely of being false to their own honor, but of having betrayed the true interests of liberal education. For assuredly no form of education can justly be called 'liberal' in which the study of science and preparation for active life are not associated as their necessary complement with that study of polite letters to which classical learning is certainly the best, and possibly the indispensable foundation".

This brief outline of Mr. Page's paper suggests certain comments, which, however, lack of space makes it necessary to postpone to the next issue of *The Classical Weekly*.

C. K.

THE VOCABULARY OF HIGH SCHOOL LATIN

The last thirty years have been remarkable for the attention paid to every detail of Latin teaching in the secondary school. The system in vogue before that time had come down by tradition from the Middle Ages and had inevitably all the faults that would naturally belong to a system devised for an entirely different purpose from that for which we teach Latin at the present time. Latin during the Middle Ages and afterwards offered a universal means of communication, and for that reason training in the practical use of the Latin tongue was a part of the education of every cultivated person.

Nowadays, the chief function of Latin study, apart from mental gymnastic and the instruction in general grammar that it involves, is to acquaint the student with the masterpieces of the literature of Rome; to bring him face to face with those authors whose works have been for ages one of the chief foundations of culture. It is evident, therefore, that the object of the study of Latin nowadays is quite different from, almost opposite to that of former generations. At the same time, in recent years, the curriculum of the secondary school has been revolutionized, all the branches of modern knowledge have clamored for recognition, and inasmuch as in the earlier period Greek, Latin and Mathematics constituted practically the whole curriculum, it was inevitable that the introduction of modern literature and science into the school curriculum could only be accomplished by restricting the time given to the Classics. So far as Greek is concerned, this change has been entirely destructive and for all practical purposes Greek has become merely an ornamental or extra study in the high school. Latin has fared much better than Greek, and is still a very necessary element in secondary education; but it has come to occupy a very restricted place in the curriculum, while the object and method of its teaching have been radically changed. The discussions of this modern period have not failed to include the question of the organization of the whole high school curriculum in Latin as well as the best methods of teaching, but so far as the substance of the curriculum is concerned there has been, however, not a great change. At present, the high school curriculum is usually one of four years, the first of which is occupied by a beginner's book and the other three by Caesar, Cicero and Vergil respectively. This scheme is partly traditional, partly evolutionary, but, unlike some other matters of tradition, it has been demonstrated by actual experience as well as by investigation to be based upon very sound principles. Only one part of it has been at all seriously modified, and that is the first year, devoted, as I have said, to the beginner's book. In the case of the